

Message Text

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62

ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJ: TELEVISION POLICY QUESTION

1. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM ARTICLE ENTITLED "CANADA
DOWNGRADES MEETING WITH U.S. ON CABLE FUSS" BY MICHAEL LAVOIE
(CANADIAN PRESS STAFF WRITED) PUBLISHED OTTAWA CITIZED,
JANUARY 9.

2. BEGIN QUOTE. IN WHAT MAY BE SEEN BY THE U.S. AS A
CALCULATED SNUB, A SMALL GROUP OF MIDDLE-LEVEL OFFICIALS
WITH NO NEGOTIATING POWER WILL MEET SENIOR U.S. COMMUNICA-
TIONS AUTHORITIES HERE TUESDAY TO DISCUSS CANADA'S CONTROVER-
SIAL CABLE TELEVISION POLICY.

COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICIALS SAID
THURSDAY THE CANADIAN DELEGATION WILL BE EMPOWERED ONLY TO
GIVE BACKGROUND EXPLANATIONS OF A CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION
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COMMISSION (CRTC) POLICY ALLOWING CABLE TELEVISION COMPANIES

TO STRIP COMMERCIALS FROM IMPORTED U.S. TELEVISION SIGNALS.

NEITHER COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER JEANNE SAUVE NOR ACTING CRTC CHAIRMAN HARRY BOYLE WILL ATTEND EVEN THOUGH THE U.S. GROUP IS HEADED BY RICHARD WILEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (FCC), THE U.S. BROADCASTING REGULATORY AGENCY.

THE AMERICANS ARE SAID TO BE TREATING THE MEETING AS AN IMPORTANT NEGOTIATING SESSION ON A NUMBER OF CANADA-U.S. BORDER BROADCASTING PROBLEMS. INDICATIONS FROM WASHINGTON ARE THAT THE FCC WILL ALLOW THREE BUFFALO, N.Y. TELEVISION STATIONS TO JAM SIGNALS NOW BEING RECEIVED IN THE TORONTO-HAMILTON AREA IF SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IS NOT MADE AT THE MEETING.

THE VIEW HERE IS THAT, WHILE THE AMERICANS MAY BE OFFENDED BY THE ABSENCE OF MRS. SAUVE AND MR. BOYLE, WHO IS MR. WILEY'S CANADIAN COUNTERPART, THERE IS A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS TO BE ONLY A BACKGROUND SESSION ON THE COMMERCIAL DELETION POLICY.

"THE MEETING WAS CALLED AT THEIR REQUEST," A COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL SAID. "WE WILL LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY BUT NO DECISIONS ARE GOING TO BE MADE."...

AN FCC OFFICIAL SAID MR. WILEY DECIDED PERSONALLY TO ATTEND THE MEETING HERE BECAUSE OF "INTENSE AND GROWING" PRESSURE ON THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO FORCE CHANGES IN CANADIAN POLICY.

THE LAST FORMAL MEETING ON COMMERCIAL DELETION WAS HELD IN WASHINGTON LAST SUMMER BETWEEN MR. WILEY AND FORMER CRTC CHAIRMAN PIERRE JUNEAU. OFFICIALS SAID THE U.S. MADE NO PROGRESS.

SINCE THEN, BUFFALO TV STATIONS HAVE APPEARED BEFORE A COMMONS COMMITTEE TO PROTEST THE TAX LEGISLATION AND HAVE MADE FORMAL APPLICATION TO THE FCC FOR PERMISSION TO JAM SIGNALS GOING INTO CANADA FOR A TRIAL PERIOD.

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MR. WILEY WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY STATE DEPARTMENT AND U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS AT THE HALF-DAY CLOSED MEETING AT EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HEADQUARTERS HERE.

MRS. SAUVE WAS TO BE IN FLORIDA TUESDAY FOR THE LAUNCH OF A NEW CANADIAN COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE BUT THE LAUNCH HAS BEEN POSTPONED. COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SAID SHE

STILL INTENDS TO STAY AWAY FROM THE MEETING. THE DEPARTMENT IS EXPECTED TO BE REPRESENTED BY AN OFFICIAL FROM THE SOCIAL POLICY AND PROGRAMS BRANCH.

MR. BOYLE AND OTHER CRTIC MEMBERS WILL BE IN TORONTO FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS NEXT WEEK. AN OFFICIAL SAID THE BROADCAST LICENSING AGENCY LIKELY WILL BE REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING BY J.M. SHOEMAKER, DIRECTOR OF POLICY PLANNING AND ANALYSIS, AND T.R. HART, A SPECIAL ADVISER ON OPERATIONS.

THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT IS EXPECTED TO SEND U.S. DIVISION DIRECTOR G.S. SHORTLIFFE AND AN OFFICIAL OF THE TRANSPORT, ENERGY AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION. END QUOTE. ABBREVIATED VERSION APPEARED TORONTO STAR SAME DATE. JOHNSON

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